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Moving Out Does Not Always Mean Moving On: Placement Stability and Relational Permanence for Care-Experienced Young People

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Moving out does not always mean moving on:

Placement stability and relational permanence for care-experienced young people



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Care Pathways and Outcomes

The teens & early adulthood





The Care Pathways and Outcomes Study

- Longitudinal study following 374 children who were in care on 31/3/00 in NI and under 5 yrs.
- Aim: To find out what placements the children end up in; and whether placement type matter.
- 3 phases completed. On the fourth phase.





IV: The Teens and Early Adulthood



ISSUES

Handwritten list of issues:

- Identity
- Service-provision
- Coping
- Health
- Attachment
- Education
- Stress
- Self-concept
- Social-support
- Lifestyle
- Life-satisfaction
- Belonging
- Contact

METHODS

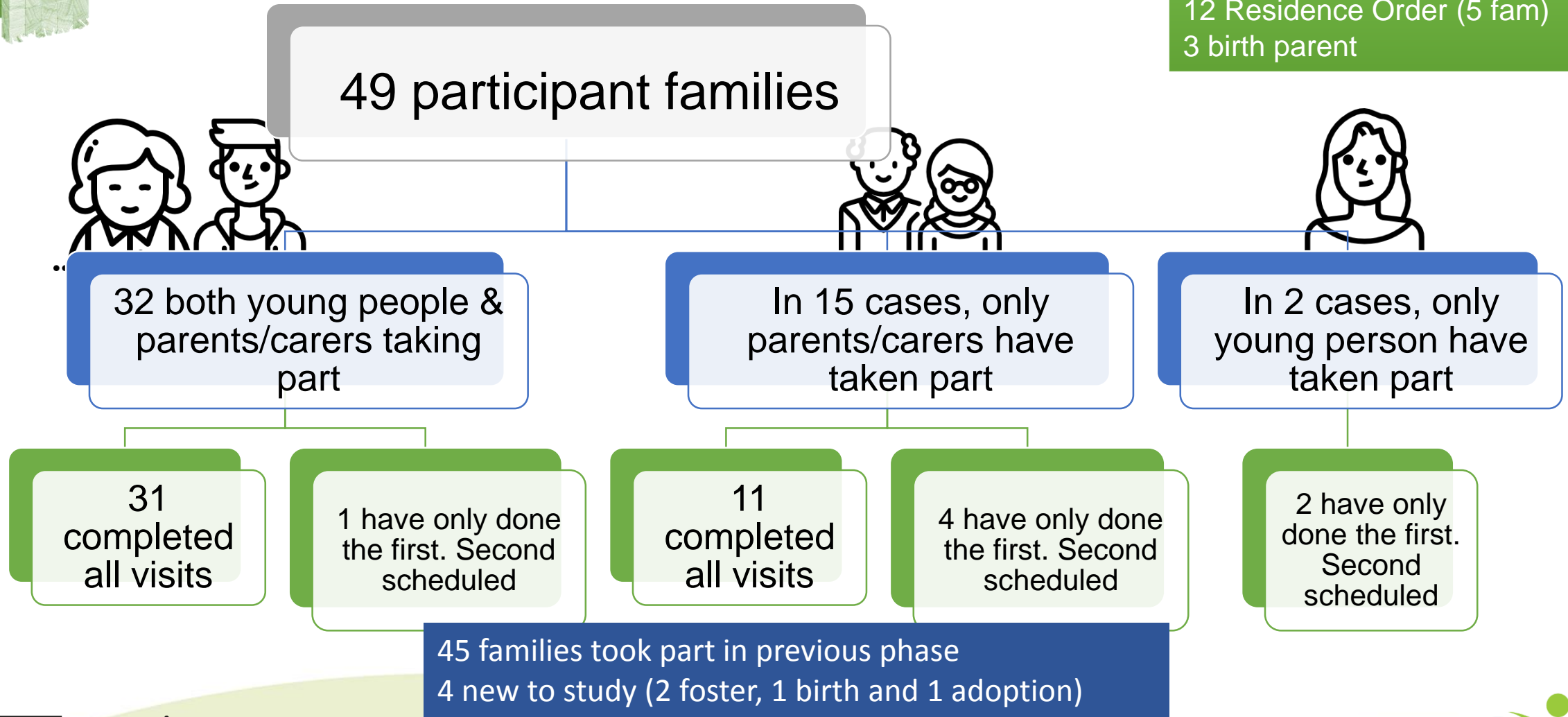
- 1st visit to families:
 - Online survey on iPad: 1 for young people & 1 for carers/parents;
 - Two tests on iPad for young people: spatial working memory and decision-making
- 2nd visit to families:
 - Semi-structured interviews.





Data collection so far

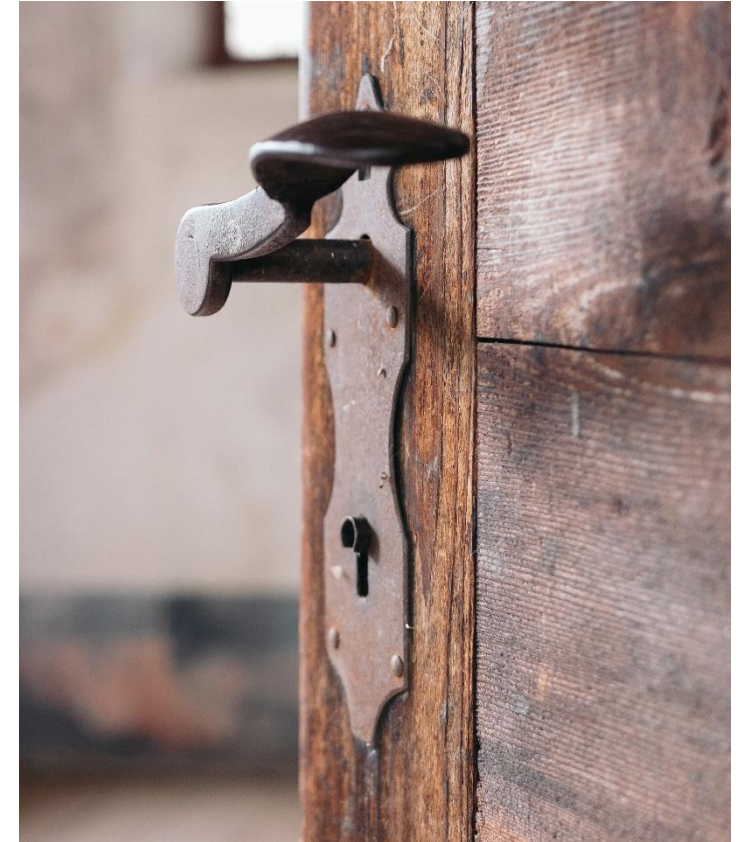
13 foster care
7 kinship care
14 adoption (1 fam)
12 Residence Order (5 fam)
3 birth parent





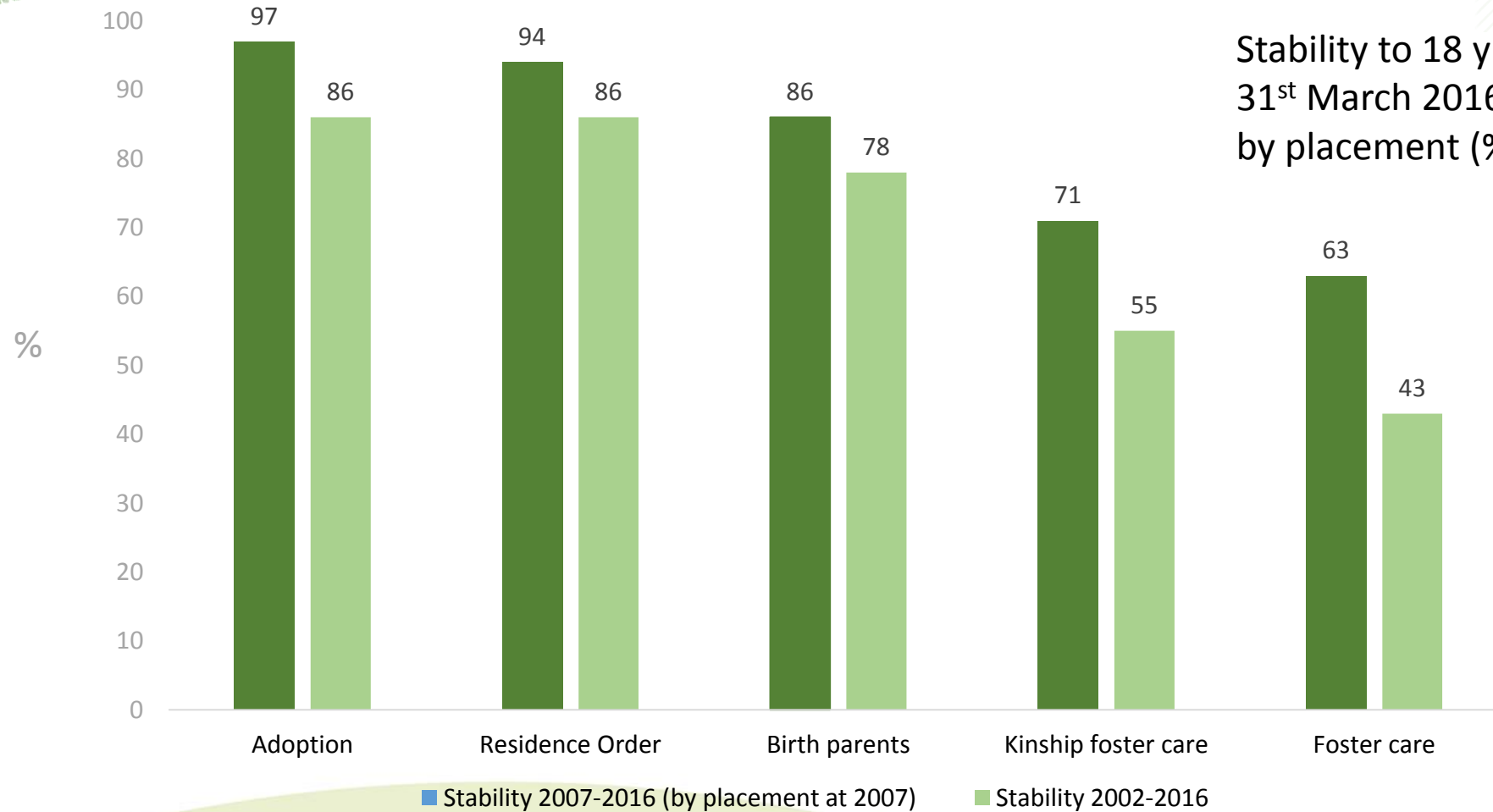
Placement stability and relational permanence

- Placement stability for the CPO group between 2000 and 2009
- The concept of relational permanence
- Findings on relational permanence and belonging from our group
- Placement breakdowns and permanency
- Summary
- Implications for policy and practice





Placement stability



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EUSARF 2018
XV International Conference





Relational permanence



- Permanence can occur without continuity of placement
- Placement stability does not necessarily mean that the young person feels secure or part of that family.
- THUS – placement stability ignores the subjective experience of the young person.
- **RELATIONAL PERMANENCE = young person's enduring parent-like connection to caring adults** (Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte, 2013)





Relational permanence and belonging



- All parents/carers interviewed expressed warm and loving feelings for the young people they cared for (even when pl broke down).
- Young people also described feelings of love and belonging to these foster/adoptive/birth families, most calling their caregivers mum and dad (or granny/granddad depending on their age or relationship).



Just your like, its just like a normal family like, as my [adoptive] mum always says, I might not have gave birth to you but I feel like I have, you know. Like I'm so like her, I'm the double.



Madeleine, 20 yrs old, adopted

I still call her mum. ... Of course, I always call her mum. She IS my mum. She brought me up. She raised me. ... She always keeps in contact, or she will never drift too far apart. ... She just wants to see me doing well. She doesn't wants to see me going downwards again. And with her support and everyone's support, hopefully I won't.



Carl, 22 yrs old, was in foster care, pl broke down @13



Placement breakdowns



- Of the 48 young people taking part in our study so far, **9 have experienced a placement breakdown** (17% of all breakdowns):

- 4 in foster care (of 13 recruited)
- 3 in kinship care (of 7 recruited)
- One adopted (of 14 recruited)
- One living with birth parents (of 3 recruited)

- Of these 9, all still had a special bond, and 7 had managed to maintain their relationship going (with regular contact) over the years while living apart.

Of the 354 young people in the study (for which we know placement type at 18 or at 31/03/2016)



We knew something was going to happen sooner or later because he was getting more violent. We knew something was going to happen but...

We said, we said one or two nights in a police cell would have cured him.

Instead of the move directly to the residential home.

It would have. I think if they had kept in the police cell I think that would have been the better option and I think we would have got him back home then.

Because once he experienced that he just thought he was the bees knees. He really thought.

Getting high on drugs.

He didn't want to come home. They more or less gave him the freedom of the city.

He was my son you know. ... He's their wee brother and he still is. **He's still my son.**

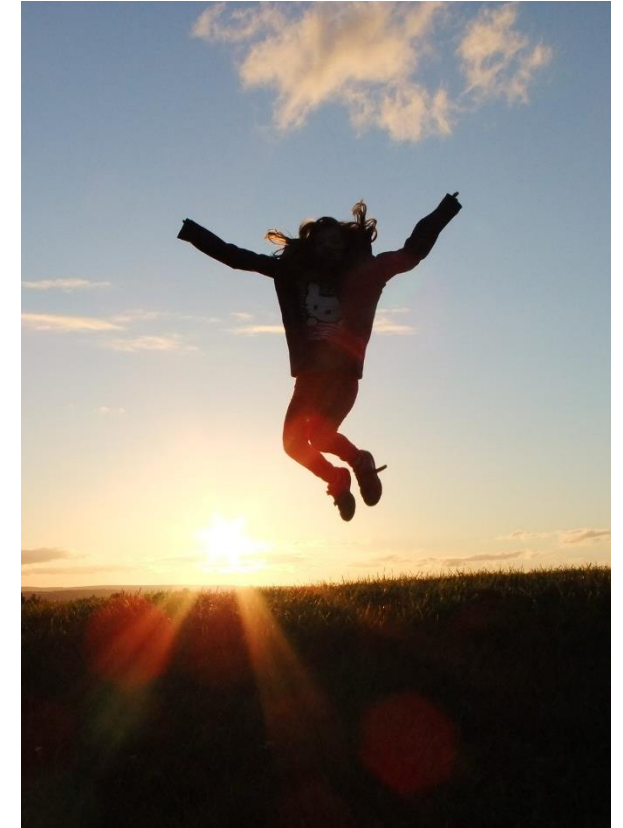




SUMMARY



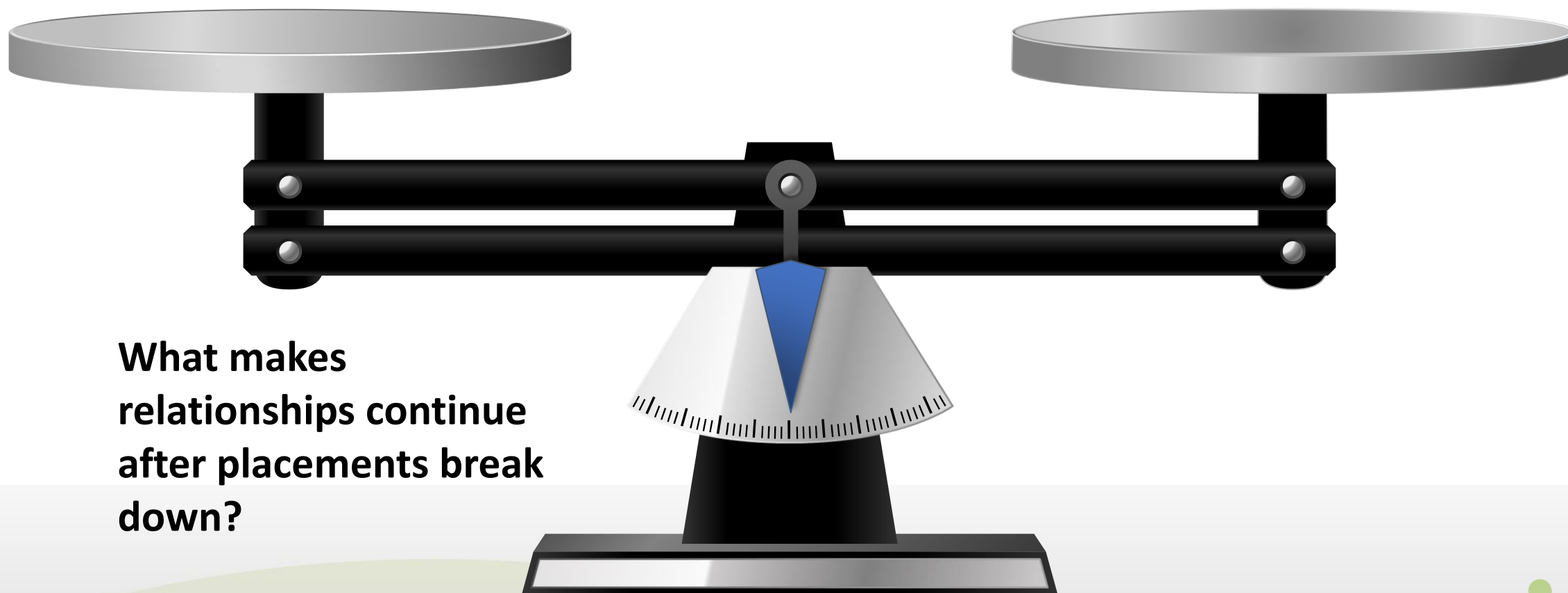
- High levels of placement stability across a 14-year period for children adopted, placed on RO, and who lived with birth parents.
- Level of stability twice as high in adoption compared with foster care BUT level of stability over a 14-yr old period for foster care still close to 50%.
- All yp (except for one) developed a sense of belonging & connection to the family, which continued into early adulthood (irrespective of placement).





Placement type

Length of placement



**What makes
relationships continue
after placements break
down?**



Implications for policy & practice



- Long-term placement breakdowns should not be deemed the end of these relationships. THUS greater effort to be made by SS to maintain contact between yp and foster parents/carers following breakdown/disruption (if both parties so wish).
- Foster/kinship foster parents/carers should be seen & recognised as a source of vital social/emotional support for yp.
- Young children should be placed with long-term carers asap to help build the foundations for future supportive relationships.



Questions



McSherry, D. & Fargas Malet, M. (2018). The Extent of Stability and Relational Permanence Achieved for Young Children in Care in Northern Ireland. *Children Australia*, 43(2), 124-134.

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